

League for Socialist Action/ Ligue Socialiste Ouvrière

Discusssion Bulletin 1972

Contents

ACTION PROGRAM FOR AN INDEPENDENT AND
FRENCH QUEBEC

Presented by the Central Committee of the LSA/LSO to
the 1972 Convention

JUNE

Editor's note: this resolution was apparently not presented to the delayed 1973 convention of the LSA/LSO and was subsequently referred to only by supporters of the Ross Dowson tendency in 1973 (see the 1973 PC convention documents).

Number

One

Price

40

ACTION PROGRAM FOR AN INDEPENDENT AND FRENCH QUEBEC

“Presented by the Central Committee of the LSA/LSO to the 1972 Convention, June 1972”

INDEX

1. The National Oppression of the Québécois
2. The National Struggle Today, its Goals, and its Opponents
3. For an Independent and French Quebec
4. What Force in the Nation can Carry it Out?
5. For a Mass Labor Party
6. Conception and Dynamic of the Program
7. Nationalism and Internationalism
8. The Kind of Society We are Aiming For

1. The National Oppression of the Québécois

"In the British legislation regarding the lands of Lower Canada, there is something which grieves the heart of a French Canadian; in it can be seen, can be felt, the Machiavellian Spirit which motivates a party ever bent on our destruction and our annihilation.... we are surrounded by a population foreign to our customs and our habits and, as the process could not go fast enough by itself, the soil, which legislation had denied us, has been handed over to foreign companies.

"The heritage of our forefathers will soon be in the hands of foreigners who consequently will extract the most pure substance from a young country to feed British luxury; we pay an annual tribute to the gods of Great Britain and the capital which could have been spent among ourselves to encourage arts, science and industry, will be swallowed up

In pure waste, in the treasure of our esteemed masters and lords, the land companies of Canada."

This extract from the newspaper *Le Canadien* of July 1, 1832, illustrates the conditions that the Québécois endured and the sentiment of rebellion to which they gave birth In the period of the struggle of the Patriotes.

On February 28, 1838 -- in the course of the national democratic revolution which they were leading -- the Patriotes proclaimed the independence of Quebec (Lower Canada);

"Whereas the solemn pact made between the people of Upper and Lower Canada, recorded in the Book of Statutes of the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland, the thirty-first chapter of the bills passed in the thirty-first year of the reign of King George the third, has been continually violated by the British government; Whereas the same government, has trampled on and usurped our rights, has scorned and turned a deaf ear to our petitions, appeals, protests and demonstrations against its unconstitutional and unjust Intervention in our affairs; Whereas it has disposed of our revenues without the constitutional consent of the local Legislature, pillaged our colonial treasure, ordered the arrest of several of our fellow-citizens and put them in chains, sent armies of mercenaries into our lands who have sowed alarm, fright and consternation, and the same soldiery has reddened our soil with the blood of a considerable number of our compatriotes, burned our villages, profaned our temples, established throughout the whole of our country the most atrocious reign of terror; and whereas we can no longer endure these repeated violations of our most precious rights and patiently bear these recent countless outrages and cruelties of the government of Lower Canada; We, in the name of the people of Lower Canada following the decree of Divine Providence which permits us to overthrow a government which has refused to recognize the purpose and intention for which it was created, and to choose the most appropriate form of government to establish justice, assure domestic peace to provide for the common defence, to promote the general good and to guarantee to us and to posterity the benefits of civil and religious Freedom."

But the Parti Patriote (Patriot Party) was wiped out by the British Army, their leaders were executed or exiled to Australia, and the national-democratic revolution was defeated. The Québécois were not able to emancipate

themselves in the name of liberty and national independence as did the Americans in 1776 and the French in 1789.

Since the military conquest of the Québécois by the British Army in 1759, the Quebec people remained colonized and subject to the interests of foreign exploiters. The Québécois were kept on their knees under the economic, political, cultural and linguistic domination exercised first by Great Britain and then by English Canada and the United States.

The opposition of the Québécois to this foreign domination was not stifled by the execution in 1839 of the Patriote leaders.

The opposition to this domination was expressed in different ways throughout the long history of Quebec up to the present day. During the two imperialist world wars the Québécois, unlike the English Canadians, flatly refused conscription into the imperialist army of England.

The Québécois were denied the right to their own homeland.

Since Confederation in 1867 and the creation of "Canada from sea to sea", the Québécois have been kept in a straightjacket, subordinated to the English Canadian nation, having neither the right to their own national state nor to their own national language.

The denial of their fundamental democratic rights, this national, cultural and linguistic oppression, represents the indispensable superstructure that is necessary to maintain the economic oppression of Quebec.

The standard of living of the Québécois reflects the oppressed position of the Québécois nation as compared to the English Canadian nation. The per capita income in Quebec is less than the Canadian average. The rate of unemployment in Quebec is higher, occasionally surpassing that of the underdeveloped region of the Maritimes, and is twice that of Ontario. In the cities, where two languages are spoken, it is the francophones who live in the poor sections. As for education for the francophones, it is generally considered inferior to that of the English Canadians.

With academic resources inferior to English education, French education is geared to provide a low income work force with little or no skills for industry and the service sectors.

However, the form of oppression that the Québécois

resent most profoundly is the status given to the French language. The situation is such that the majority of Montrealers can live in French only with difficulty in this city, the nation's most important urban centre. The best hospitals in Montreal only function in English -- the staff very often have unilingual English supervisors and the patients are obliged to express themselves in English.

The domination of the English-speaking population has relegated the French language to a completely subordinate role in daily life, which tends to corrupt the French language and culture. McGill University in Montreal, the richest in Canada, serves the English-speaking minority. Even in the French language schools, scientific courses are given with many of the textbooks in English.

The discrimination against the French language is most notable on the job where the ability to work in English is an essential precondition for advancement and even sometimes for being hired. The highest positions are occupied by the anglophones; the francophones are not generally promoted to these posts even if they speak English.

In labor relations and public relations -- where the companies have to deal with an audience in large majority francophone -- several firms continue to operate exclusively in English.

Between 80 and 90 percent of the Québécois workers work for English-speaking capitalists. In Montreal, 80% of the wealth of the companies is found in the hands of these capitalists. The effects of foreign control on the economy are seen in its deformed development and by the exaggerated number of raw material extraction industries and of industries which only require cheap labor.

In many ways, Quebec corresponds to the classical definition of an "internal" colony, supplying to the foreign capitalists a reserve of cheap labor and natural resources.

We are a people who cannot even think in our own language.

2. The National Struggle Today, its Goals, and its Opponents

The struggle of the Québécois for national liberation has dominated the political life of Quebec since the British conquest of 1759. In other words, the urgent political task

on the agenda is the national emancipation of the Québécois. Therein lies the most pressing objective political necessity for the Québécois nation.

National emancipation means for the Québécois the establishment of a country with a national language and a national state capable of serving the interests of the Québécois. These are the two central elements which constitute our national emancipation -- national independence and the establishment of French as the national language. The general program of national emancipation of the Québécois is expressed by the slogan "For an independent and French Quebec".

The nationalism of the Québécois is the sentiment and the movement of an oppressed nation against an oppressor nation. Quebec nationalism is directed against the structure which maintains the national oppression of Quebec, that is, the Canadian capitalist state. The Canadian capitalist state is the tool of the political domination of the Canadian and American capitalists who own almost all the means of production which form the basis of the Canadian economy.

The government of Quebec is composed of sell-outs and traitors, subordinate to Ottawa which gives them a few powers while maintaining the real control. The goal of the government and the National assembly is to foster the illusion that the Québécois are governed by their own authorities. When it comes to a crisis or a threat to its domination, it is the federal government that sends its army to put down the population.

The English-speaking population of Quebec, largely composed of workers and students, are also oppressed by the Canadian state which gives some real and imaginary privileges to the anglophones in order to divide the workers according to their nationality, and in order to create among the anglophones a racist attitude toward the francophones.

It is the Canadian state that maintains racism toward the Québécois, thus making the Québécois second-class citizens. The Canadian capitalist state oppresses Quebec through its army, its courts, its taxation, and the whole Canadian state structure. This is the enemy of the struggle

for national emancipation.

While the Quebec government tries to make believe that it is possible to "negotiate" with Ottawa for the extension of national rights of the Québécois, the federal government has often proven the contrary, by sending soldiers armed with machine guns to respond to the demands of the Québécois.

Never has Canadian capitalism given up any part of its privileges and its interests without a fierce struggle by the masses. Ottawa will only give in to the national demands of the Québécois under enormous mass pressure. The government of Quebec is incapable of exercising such a pressure being almost unarmed and totally tied to and dependent on Ottawa. The War Measures (Act) crisis of 1970 really showed the weakness of Quebec and its dependence on the federal government since Prime Minister Trudeau had to call in his army to check the "apprehended insurrection" and to avoid a Quebec governmental crisis.

Only the Québécois masses themselves -- those who really suffer national oppression, can exert such a pressure on Ottawa, to the point of breaking its grip on the Québécois nation. The Quebec masses cannot put their trust in the sold-out Quebec elite to obtain our rights and emancipation. It is necessary for the Quebec nation to mobilize hundreds of thousands of patriots into a truly independent striking force, capable of going into the streets against our oppressors. Let us rely only on ourselves. The liberation of Quebec will be the work of the Quebec people.

Our oppressors will never give up their privileges without a real mass struggle which forces them to back down. Our national emancipation is not negotiable -- what is in question are our fundamental democratic rights as a nation.

Such a mass struggle needs an action program, a program of struggle, pointing out and specifying in a comprehensible way the goals of the struggle at each stage. Such a program can make the Québécois in their majority move faster and farther along the road of struggle against the federal government, by concretizing the discontent and the general combativity of the Quebec masses. Such a program must be able to mobilize broader and broader layers of the nation by presenting real solutions to immediate problems that are posed and by presenting them in a defensive and understandable way.

The program can play an indispensable role in the transformation of the Quebec patriots into a really conscious, coherent, and organized force, by giving them an overall solution to the national question and a global perspective in the struggle.

Thus the program draws its demands from the daily reality of the Québécois, starting from partial and immediate national struggles, linking them directly to a perspective of a radical and global transformation of the society that will put an end to all oppression and exploitation, of which the Québécois are victims.

3. For an Independent and French Quebec

First of all, in order to emancipate itself, an oppressed nation must take its destiny into its own hands. This is one of the most fundamental democratic principles. A nation cannot look forward to being governed in its own interests as long as the real government is to be found in the nation which has conquered it. We are presently slaves who live off the miserable crumbs of the master.

It is impossible for us to break the colonialist chains and emancipate ourselves without full control of all our affairs. Only the Québécois are capable of managing their country according to their needs. Neither the government in Ottawa nor the Queen in London is capable of doing this in our place.

It is necessary to place in the framework of the struggle for total independence all the struggles and partial demands of the day which pose the question of who will have the power of decision over the Quebec population; the latter or the anti-Québécois federal government.

Here are some demands which can bring us encouraging victories and which can also help to raise the confidence of our colonised nation in its own strength, while posing the basis for wider struggles to come:

a) Withdraw the Canadian army from Quebec territory. The military barracks and the troops of the Canadian army have never served to defend the Québécois against anyone. On the contrary, the federal government has made use of them often enough to attack our rights, to bludgeon us, to

intimidate us, and even to massacre us (April 1, 1918). We want no more of the occupation army.

b) Establish a democratic republic. Abolish all legal and governmental references to the Queen of England and her lieutenant-governor. Having no relationship to the Quebec nation other than that of a conqueror, the Queen does not even dare to visit Quebec. Every reference to the British monarchy is anti-democratic because the Queen and the lieutenant-governor have never been elected by the Québécois. The monarchy is only a symbol of the submission of the Québécois. The population must elect all officials and government functionaries, including the president of the republic and all the chiefs of police.

c) All power to the National Assembly; make the parliament in Quebec a truly national assembly and not a provincial and colonized one, as it is at present. Policy for the Quebec nation, in all areas including foreign affairs, unemployment insurance, social security, justice and broadcasting, railway, air and maritime transport, must be elaborated by the Québécois and not by English Canada. In this way, all policies affecting Quebec will express its needs and its opinions:

d) For an independent monetary system.

e) For an independent customs policy to permit the Québécois to establish import tariffs according to the needs of the Québécois.

f) Repeal the federal abortion laws. Repeal all the federal laws that oppress Québécois women. Give Quebec women the right to decide whether or not they want a pregnancy, and not the regime in Ottawa, composed of men and federalists. Give Quebec women control over their bodies and their lives.

g) Repatriate the Québécois territory. Labrador, stolen from the Québécois, must be repatriated. All francophones living around and about Quebec such as those in Ontario as well as the Acadians, must demand from Ottawa

h) James Bay is not for sale. No sale of land to private exploitation; no concessions to foreign companies, whether in forest products or mining. The Quebec territory,

the rivers, lakes, and forests are the national wealth of the Québécois and the Native peoples who live in the regions in question. For the right of self-determination of the Amerindians and the Inuit (Eskimo) including the right to separate. Quebec for the Québécois, and not for the foreign exploiters.

A nation cannot be free and emancipated as long as the majority does not have the right to speak its language on the job. The French language has become corrupted, already non-existent in the technical and scientific fields. More and more the language of the Québécois is limited to the home after 5 PM, like some kind of folklore. What wretched alienation. The struggle to defend the French language in the face of anglicization is directed against a powerful and insidious arm of foreign domination. Every partial demand that helps establish French as the national language constitutes a step towards the elimination of one of the most effective methods of keeping us submissive, inferior, incapable of communicating, and thinking adequately.

Here are some of these demands:

- a) Repeal Bill 63. No to any other law that gives an equal status to French and English. No to any law that makes the language a family affair, when it should be one of our dearest national treasures. No to any other law (e.g. Bill 28), directly or indirectly concerning the language, so long as Bill 63 is not repealed.
- b) Make French the sole language of work. Every commercial or industrial enterprise on Quebec territory must institute French as the language of work of their employees and their administrators; must serve French society; must do its publicity in French, and must correspond with its clients in French. No refusal to employ a unilingual francophone for any job that does not require communication with foreigners.
- c) A single system of education in French. Two parallel systems of education, one in the language favored by the bosses, the other in the language of the unemployed, equals certain death for the language of the majority. Create a single, public, secular, French education system to put

an end to the favored status of English. End the linguistic and religious division in education. End discrimination against French schools. Put everyone into French schools after a five-year program of integration of English-speaking students. After such a program, end government subsidies to English schools.

d) No textbooks other than French in French schools. Except, of course, for the teaching of a second language, all textbooks must be available in the language of the students so that they are not obliged to be bilingual to pass their year. End all obligatory English courses. Let students decide the second language that they want to learn.

e) For a French McGill! Let this richest university in Canada serve the population that surrounds it. Transform this bastion of anglo-saxon privilege into a francophone institution open to the whole Québécois population.

f) Make French the sole language of government administration. Consequently, for example, income tax forms, all documents of the various departments, will be only in French. No refusal to hire unilingual francophones to the civil service.

g) The government of Quebec must proclaim French the only official language on its territory. All immigrants wishing to live in Quebec must be informed of this proclamation,

h) The government of Quebec must pass a law requiring a knowledge of French on the part of every professional and skilled employee, including doctors and managerial staff, in a hospital located on Quebec soil.

4. What Force in the Nation can Carry it Out?

It is clear that national oppression weighs down upon the whole nation, and that all Québécois are victims of anglicization and the exploitation of the federal governments. It is in the interest of almost all Québécois, above all the workers and the students, to win an independent and French Quebec. In this sense, this series of demands concerns the whole nation.

But the Quebec nation is not a homogeneous social formation. It is clear that all Québécois do not suffer national oppression to the same degree. A small handful of

Québécois having similar economic interests to those of our foreign exploiters are accomplices in our oppression and profit from it. These elements obviously are not very trustworthy in any struggle against our foreign oppressors.

In this sense, it is not adequate for the patriots to adopt a program of national emancipation and to believe that the whole nation will, in its entirety and at the same time engage in mass struggle to carry it out.

Given the heterogeneity of a nation, the different levels of national and political consciousness, the varied and opposing economic interests, the diverse experiences of struggle, and the different social positions of the Québécois in relation to our foreign exploiters, a national struggle for emancipation requires that a particular social force be able to place itself at the head of the whole nation in order to lead it, in its entirety, towards victory. Once the program is elaborated, the second step for the patriots is to clarify what social force in Quebec society is capable of leading, in the name of the whole nation, the national liberation struggle to victory.

It is necessary to approach this question starting from the **class division of Quebec society**, because therein lies **the most fundamental differentiation within the nation**. Those layers in society which occupy a particular place in the system of production constitute a common social class. In other words, the class character of a layer of Québécois is defined by its social function in the economy, the economy being the fundamental basis that determines the interests of every Québécois in the national sphere, as well as in all other political spheres.

First of all, there is the bourgeois or capitalist class, composed of a tiny minority who own a part of the means of production. Nothing can be expected from the French Canadian capitalist class in our struggle to be masters in our own house. The Quebec national bourgeoisie is extremely weak, and closely tied to American and Canadian capitalism, the same capitalism which maintains the national oppression of Quebec.

In the course of history, the French Canadian bourgeoisie has not been strong enough to measure up to English-speaking capital, which throttles it and controls the economy. According to an analysis of the economic elite of Canada, only 1/16 of them are French Canadians, and, except in the

case of two small banks, the power of these people entirely rests in corporations controlled by English-speaking capitalists.

Rather than defend itself, the French Canadian bourgeoisie has resigned itself to the role of servile collaborationist with the English-speaking capitalists. With the Catholic Church, it co-operates with the invaders, aiding the economic and cultural invasion, which seeks to swamp the Québécois nation in an English-speaking majority. As Leon Trotsky, one of the leaders of the Russian revolution of 1917 put it:

"...The bourgeoisie of backward countries from the days of its milk teeth grows up as an agency of foreign capital, and notwithstanding its envious hatred of foreign capital, always does and always will in every decisive situation turn up in the same camp with it." (*History of the Russian Revolution, Vol. III, pp. 55-56*).

Such is the nature of the recent governments in Quebec, either Liberal or Union Nationale. Such governments are incapable of going beyond the constitutional conferences with Ottawa, which go nowhere, since they are incapable of stepping on the toes of our exploiters to take away their privileges. Such capitalist governments fear the organization of the Quebec population against Ottawa because they are not strong enough to prevent the masses from going all the way and overthrowing all our exploiters, including those who are in the "national" government.

These capitalist governments are not trying to eliminate the privileges and wealth of the oppressing nation, but rather to acquire them for themselves.

Thus, the Quebec capitalists and the two dominant parties, far from being able to lead the national struggle, will be the first to betray it.

The other main social force in Quebec is the working class, composed of the vast majority of the nation, and having no other relation to the means of production than the selling of its labor power. The working class entirely depends for its existence on the need for its labor power to make the means of production function, which the capitalists own.

The working class represents the most exploited layer of Quebec society in the sense that it is not only economically exploited by the foreign monopolies which dominate

Quebec, and which take from it in the form of profits a part of the wealth that it produces; it is nationally oppressed by the federal government which prevents it from speaking its language on the job; but it is also exploited by the handful of Quebec capitalists. There is a constant conflict of interest between the Quebec bourgeoisie and the Quebec working class, which, for the bourgeoisie, overrides its national hostility towards the foreign domination of Quebec.

In other words, the national bourgeoisie of Quebec is in no way ready to stop its economic exploitation of the workers in the name of national unity against the oppression of Quebec.

The Quebec working class, unlike the bourgeoisie, is not dependent in any way on English Canadian and American capitalism. Besides, the Quebec workers are already in struggle, on the economic or trade union level, with these same oppressors of Quebec. Therefore, the working class has shown itself capable of playing **an independent role** in the national struggle against foreign domination; such an independent capacity is absolutely essential if we want to lead a militant, coherent and uncompromising struggle for national emancipation.

In reality, it is the working class that is the only force capable of leading the whole nation to carry the struggle to completion for an independent and French Quebec, not only because of its numbers and its independence from the foreign exploiters, but also because of its strategic position in the production system. The Québécois workers together with the farmers have the power **to reorganize and to run the entire economy**. This has been proved especially during the 1972 general strike of the public sector when workers ran many cities and institutions like the Albert-Prévost Hospital, which, according to the patients, "operated better than normally".

Although they are organized in powerful unions -- that is, on the level of economic struggle -- the Quebec working class is without a political arm, without a political party. To lead the national struggle, a political struggle of national scope, requires a mass political party.

Is the Parti Québécois such a political arm of the working class? The negative answer to this question brings us to the third social class in Quebec; the petite-bourgeoisie, or the middle class. Finding itself in the middle of the class

struggle between the worker and the capitalist, this class is composed of very heterogeneous layers, varying from those who see themselves oppressed by the bourgeoisie to the exploiting layers of small businessmen and high functionaries in the government bureaucracy.

The poor small farmers, owning their own land, and forming only a small proportion of the population, while part of the petite-bourgeoisie, are close allies of the working class. The small farmers form probably the most hard-working and exploited layer of this middle class.

During the last thirty years, a new petit-bourgeois urban layer has developed, basing itself on the administrative layers in the subsidiaries of foreign corporations or their satellite industries, as well as in the provincial state apparatus. This apparatus has seen a great expansion to service these industries.

In the private sector, the chances of a Québécois to advance to a higher level of the administrative hierarchy are very limited; and this layer, at the lower levels, constantly runs the risk of falling into the higher layers of the working class. Thus the provincial state apparatus, the posts of high functionaries, offer them the only possibility -- one of winning only the illusion of playing an independent role in the economy. Among these layers can be found the origins of the Parti Québécois.

Although the weakness of the national bourgeoisie has permitted the petite-bourgeoisie to play an exceptionally important role on certain occasions, its extreme weakness is shown in its inability of playing a real independent role in the economy of Quebec.

In the past, the petite-bourgeoisie were the principal spokesmen for Quebec nationalism. The Quebec petite-bourgeoisie has turned to independence to express its frustration with its own instability and vulnerability as a class, and also to express its impossible desire to play an independent role in economic and political life.

The petite-bourgeoisie, because of its weakness in the economy, and because of its heterogeneity -- the existence of such varied and even opposed interests -- is incapable as a social class of playing the leadership role in the national struggle. It is incapable of leading a militant, coherent and uncompromising struggle, at the head of the nation. While the exploited petite-bourgeois layers, like the farmers, have every interest in freeing themselves from foreign domination, of which they are victims, the higher layers of the

middle class are dependent on the crumbs offered by our foreign oppressors and as a result tend to line up on their side.

For this reason, the petite-bourgeoisie as a whole, deprived of its own common rallying point, has a tendency to vacillate between the two strongest classes of society.

To quote Trotsky again: "...The top layers of the petite-bourgeoisie, including the intellectuals, can take an active sometimes very vociferous part in the national struggle, but are not at all capable of playing an independent role..."

The exploited layers of the petite-bourgeoisie, above all the farmers, can and must be won to the struggle for national emancipation. They can play an important role in it, only on the condition that they follow the working class, the only coherent social force in Quebec capable of providing the strong and intransigent direction that the struggle for national liberation requires.

To meet the task of unifying and directing the whole nation against the oppression of the federal government, the working class must organize itself independently on the political level, that is, by the means of its own political party, to insure that the program and leadership of the party called upon to lead the nation is not diluted, compromised or weakened by vacillation, hesitation, and the indecision that characterizes not the majority of the nation, but rather the national bourgeoisie and the petite-bourgeoisie.

The working class needs an independent political party. Not to withdraw into itself, but to take up the front lines of the struggle of the whole Quebec nation.

The Parti Québécois, spawned and dominated by the petite-bourgeoisie, is not and cannot replace a party of the working class. This is confirmed as much by its petty begging, incomplete, and compromising program as by its conduct and its incapacity to lead the slightest struggle for the most moderate points in its own program.

The massive electoral support which the Parti Québécois has among the workers does not change its bourgeois and conciliatory character in the slightest way, any more than the Democratic Party in the United States (which also enjoys the unofficial support of the trade unions). The record of the Parti Québécois is that of a seller of the national

rights of the Québécois, of an unprincipled negotiator, who looks for small, gradual reforms in the place of a relentless struggle against the federal government, a struggle that mobilizes the energies of the Québécois masses to obtain dignity and national freedom.

For the working class, on the contrary, it is more advantageous that the necessary changes in the direction of national emancipation be won precisely by the revolutionary road and not by that of reforms, because the reformist road is one of procrastination, evasion, and the slow and painful death of the gangrenized part of the national organism.

The workers and the farmers, that is the majority of the nation, are those who suffer first and foremost from this gangrene. The revolutionary road is that of the quickest and least painful surgical operation for the nation, that which consists of resolutely amputating the gangrenized parts, that of the least concessions and precautions towards anglo-saxon federalism and its infamous and wretched institutions where the gangrene whose stench poisons the air has set in.

This is today the heart of the question that escapes the leaders of the Parti Québécois: Will our national liberation struggle be achieved by a truly great victory and the establishment of a free Quebec, truly independent and French, or simply by a miserable compromise of a "new constitution"?

The program of the Parti Québécois shows how the party is completely controlled by its leaders. Although the members of the Parti Québécois are in their vast majority students, houseworkers, white collar workers, with a certain number of trade unionists, the leaders of the party are almost without exception people completely integrated into a bourgeois perspective; crafty bourgeois politicians, old high functionaries from the rich professional elements, the "technocrats" of the state enterprises, journalists, and other ideologists of the bourgeoisie.

Most of them are associated with the government bureaucracy and the organizational structures of the government which were formed during the last twenty years, following the last wave of imperialist penetration into Quebec.

Many of the leaders of the Parti Québécois have a long history of loyal service in the traditional parties of the bourgeoisie and petite-bourgeoisie. The main leader of the Parti Québécois, René Lévesque, directed several ministries in the Liberal government of Jean Lesage. The

deputy leader, Gilles Grégoire, led a nationalist wing of the Social Credit caucus in the House of Commons in Ottawa. The economic expert of the Parti Québécois, Jacques Parizeau, was one of the principal economic advisers under the Liberal and Union National regimes; he helped draft much of the anti-labor legislation now in effect. Claude Morin, a Deputy Minister in the Quebec government for six years recently joined this team of "liberators".

The **bourgeois** and **pseudo-nationalist** character of the Parti Québécois is seen most clearly in its attitude towards foreign monopolies, the trusts, whose domination of the economy is one of the principal sources of the national oppression of the Québécois. The Parti Québécois welcomes foreign capital with enthusiasm and promises to do everything possible to protect it. In reality, the Parti Québécois openly poses itself as the best defence **against** the mass independentist movement, a movement that threatens the stability of the imperialist interests that dominate us.

The program of the Parti Québécois explicitly promises to "American corporations" that once in power, the party will "play the role of any normal government" by assuring that "violent extremism, continual disorder, contradictory laws, and excessive taxation will not upset their operations."

In other words, in the name of "moderation", the Parti Québécois hopes **to better** accommodate the foreign capitalists who rape and pillage the economy, language and culture of Quebec. The Québécois are colonized and subjected precisely because we were always **too moderate** in dealing with the racist and extremist invaders. In the name of the survival of the Quebec nation, threatened every day by assimilation at the hands of a minority which is rapidly becoming a majority, the patriots need radical solutions -- the only way of amputating the radically gangrenized parts of the nation.

The ambiguity of the Parti Québécois on national rights flows from its ultimate desire to collaborate with, and not to fight, our English-speaking oppressors. Although it demands (with polite words) that French be the only official language, the Parti Québécois is explicitly opposed to a system of unilingual schools, by its insistence that "Quebec recognize the education rights of the English-speaking minority.... from elementary school to university".

In the name of the so-called "acquired rights" of the anglophones (in reality, the rights **conquered** in 1759 and reinforced by military interventions in 1918, 1942, 1969 -- the strike of the Montreal police -- and 1970 -- *(the War Measures Act --ed.)*), the Parti Québécois tries to convince us that the language problem is the fault of the immigrants that the Parti Québécois seeks to integrate into the French community, all the while maintaining the privileges of the minority. Here is the real vehicle of linguistic oppression -- the existence of two educational systems subsidized by the state, one in English, the language of the bosses, the other in French, the language of the unemployed.

The conduct of the Parti Québécois is more telling than its program. Since its formation, the Parti Québécois has been opposed, sometimes violently, to nationalist actions: St-Léonard (*the struggle for a French-only secondary school in a Montreal largely immigrant suburb --Ed.*), McGill-Français, mass actions against Bill 63, and the October 16 demonstrations for a French Quebec and against the War Measures (Act). As for workers' actions, the Parti Québécois has many times supported "emergency laws" forcing strikers to return to work (municipal workers in Montreal, the injunction against the October 29, 1971 demonstration against *(the Montreal daily) La Presse*, the declarations of Parizeau against the right to strike in the civil service, the refusal of the Parti Québécois to demand the liberation of the three trade union leaders imprisoned by Bourassa, etc.).

Time and again, the class character, the program and the actions (or lack of actions) of the Parti Québécois have confirmed this conclusion, that the Parti Québécois is incapable of breaking any programmatic link with our exploiters to put its sole trust in the power of the Quebec masses in motion. The Parti Québécois fears the strength of the masses, which it pretends to want to emancipate; the Parti Québécois is incapable of leading the nation in a militant and uncompromising struggle against our oppressors, towards national emancipation.

The attitude of the patriots toward the Parti Québécois must be one that seeks to push this party to lead toward the national struggle. This can only be done on condition that the patriots exist independently of the Parti Québécois and outside of it. It is possible in the course of the struggle to push the Parti Québécois to join particular actions, while exposing it before its members and before the nation. It is desirable and possible to force the Parti Québécois to support nationalist actions initiated by other organizations, on the

condition that the patriots avoid the conciliatory influence and control that reigns within the party.

Insofar as the Parti Québécois engages in concrete actions against the nation that oppresses us, we will support these actions in all cases and more resolutely than anyone else, since we are the firmest and most consistent enemies of the oppression of the Québécois. Insofar as the Parti Québécois tries to betray the struggle or limit its scope, we are flatly opposed to them.

In other words, the patriots cannot put any confidence in the Parti Québécois. They must therefore remain outside the Parti Québécois in order to win the nationalist movement to the necessity of constructing the organization which alone can lead the nation towards the establishment of an independent and French Quebec.

5. For a Mass Labor Party

It is obvious that the program for an independent and French Quebec could not be applied at the level of a district, or even at the level of a city. Such a sweeping national program could only be applied at the level of the whole nation. Then national emancipation can only be won by taking over the national government of Quebec, by establishing a workers and farmers government in the place of the national traitors who are now there. This is the indispensable weapon in a struggle against Ottawa. And this is what should be the goal of a mass labor party which puts itself at the head of the nation-political power in Quebec.

Such a party must be built on the basis of the powerful economic organizations of the working class, that is the trade unions. It is up to the trade union movement to take the initiative and to launch the labor party, with the support and participation of the nationalist movements and the left wing movements. The only way of protecting its independent and working class character, while at the same time not excluding other elements like the farmers, professionals, small shopkeepers, is to assure a predominant participation of the trade union movement, at the level of leadership, structure and financing of the party.

A workers' party is an indispensable instrument for the organization of effective actions to win immediate and partial

demands of the national program. The labor party could also be an essential instrument for mobilizing the Québécois masses in struggle for governmental power and for complete liberation.

Does this party have to be like the others? Definitely not. On the contrary, national oppression and the other conditions that will surround its creation will push it towards a totally different road. The solutions to national oppression of the Québécois already require the participation of the masses.

With the participation of the patriots and all the Quebec left and nationalist movements, it would be very possible to have it adopt a program of national demands of a revolutionary nature. This party can become a militant and broad movement, not limited to parliamentarism, but active in all areas where the welfare of the nation is at stake.

Here is a proposed program for such a party, which, together with the national demands proposed above, could make such a party the leading political organization of the whole nation.

National Politics

- a) Liberation of all political and trade union prisoners behind bars because they dared to struggle against the oppression of the Québécois.
- b) For wage parity with Ontario workers.
- c) Sliding scale of wages according to the cost of living, Minimum annual salary to end poverty in Quebec and a low income level.
- d) A nation cannot be free without full employment for all its citizens. The work week must be reduced with no loss in take-home pay in order to share the existing work among those who want to work.
- e) Expropriation of all foreign companies who close up and leave the Québécois without work, under the control and administration of the workers who work there.
- f) To assure that all Québécois have adequate housing: limitation of rent to a maximum of 10% of the total income. For a vast program of government construction of low-rent housing.

g) Open all the books of foreign companies to determine if they have super-exploited the Québécois and made super-profits. Tax the super-profits. Finance campaigns for the improvement of inadequate translations into the French language, etc.

h) Nationalization of all banks and finance companies. These enterprises have lived for many years on the misery of the Québécois people, and have profited from them to an incredibly high degree.

i) Nationalization of ***La Presse***, the biggest French daily newspaper in Quebec, which has shown by its crude federalism, and its anti-working class politics, its incapacity to manage the newspaper in the interests of the nation and not in the interests of the fast buck.

j) Nationalization of all foreign-owned book companies like Hachette and the massive publication of Québécois books.

k) To break the grip of the Catholic Churches on the hospitals, secularization of all francophone hospitals. This would end the discrimination suffered by francophone women who want to obtain an abortion.

l) Expropriate all federal buildings and transform them into cultural and linguistic centres open to everyone. This is designed to recuperate a small part of the federalist pillage of Quebec.

International Policy

a) Withdraw Quebec from all military alliances which have as their aim the suppression of national liberation struggles all around the world. Immediate withdrawal from NATO and NORAD.

b) End Canadian complicity in Vietnam! End military research in the schools and universities of Quebec! In the same way as it oppressed the people of Quebec in 1970, in the name of the "silent majority", the federal government is complicit in the American imperialist intervention in Indochina and does this in the name of the Canadian and Québécois people. But the Québécois have every reason to be in solidarity with the Indochinese people who are locked in struggle for their independence. Drive out all arms factories whose products are destined for the United States

or Indochina.

- c) To defend Quebec against any foreign intervention, above all on the part of the Canadian army, the formation of a peoples' militia under the control of the trade union movement, a militia which will be organized on a neighbourhood basis.
- d) End all aid and collaboration with all repressive regimes in the world.
- e) Self-determination for the Vietnamese and for all the peoples of the Third World, including the Canadian Indians, Eskimos (*Inuit --ed.*), and American Blacks. Solidarity with the liberation struggles of all oppressed nationalities.
- f) The establishment of cultural exchanges with all francophone countries.
- g) No Quebec participation in a foreign war without the agreement of the nation expressed in a referendum.

Trade Union Policy

- a) Immediate abolition of all bludgeon laws that take away the democratic right to strike, whether it be in public, parapublic, or private sectors. Down with Bill 19. Complete trade union freedom.
- b) That the right of all workers to speak French at work be recognized in all collective agreements.
- c) Preferential hiring and advancement for francophone workers.
- d) For the democratic control of the trade unions by the workers, with the freedom of participation for all working-class political tendencies. The elimination of all racist discrimination against francophones in the trade unions.
- e) For the launching of a daily newspaper controlled by the trade union movement which puts forward its point of view.
- f) For unity in action of the three trade union centrals through the establishment of permanent common fronts in all regions.
- g) For wage parity with Montreal in every region across Quebec.
- h) For workers control of industry by the formation of

factory committees elected by the workers in the factory.

Equality for Quebec Women

- a) Free access to abortion, coverage by the Quebec Medical Care program. No legal restrictions on this right. Women alone must decide if and when they wish to bear children.
- b) Equal pay for equal work. An end to inferior salaries for women.
- c) Free 24-hour day care centres controlled by those who use them.
- d) No refusal to hire a woman because of her sex
- e) Free access for women to scientific and technical courses in the school system. End the streaming of women into secretarial and housekeeping courses.
- f) For a guaranteed salary paid by the state for homemakers who work full-time in the home!
- g) Open all taverns to women.
- h) Repeal all discriminatory laws against women.

The Educational System

- a) For the unification of all school boards into a secular and French school system controlled entirely by officials elected by the population.
- b) Free tuition at all levels, including university, with a living wage for students during the school term.
- c) Guaranteed jobs for high school and university students during the summers and upon graduation.
- d) For a complete adult education program.
- e) Open up school facilities to workers, community groups and trade unions, after school hours.
- f) For history courses on the real history of the Québécois, on the British conquest, the Patriote rebellion of 1837-38, the struggles of women, and the struggles of workers.
- g) For complete political rights in all secondary schools and universities for students and professors, including freedom of speech and organization, the right of student papers to complete freedom, the right to distribute literature, and to use them as headquarters for organizing political and cultural assemblies, and to invite to them outside speakers

regardless of their political point of view.

h) Hold regular general assemblies to decide on all aspects of school policy, in order to obtain the opinion of the students.

i) No to the norm of 82 days in the CEGEPs (*junior colleges*). No to regulation No. 7 in secondary schools. No extension of the school year or of the number of periods in the week without the previous agreement of the students and teachers concerned.

j) All questions concerning personnel (hiring, promotions, firing etc.) must be decided by those who work and study at the educational institution in question, that is to say, by the students, the teachers, and the support staff. Put control of the classification of teachers in the hands of the union, and not the government.

It goes without saying that such a labor party would be open to Québécois of English origin and other ethnic groups, and it would be very possible to win above all the English-speaking workers, students and women who will see that through the labor party.... the realization of their economic and social demands is organically linked to the realization of the national demands of the Québécois.

The most oppressed English-speaking Québécois who are victims of the same oppressors as the francophones will realize that they cannot better their lot in any real way or emancipate themselves from exploitation without allying themselves with the oppressed majority of Quebec, which is composed of francophones. And the program of the labor party will show concretely to the oppressed anglophones of Quebec that such a unity with the francophones can only come about by the acceptance of the just and democratic national demands of the majority of the Québécois.

To look for allies in English Canada in order to fight common battles against the capitalist state in Ottawa, which also oppresses the English Canadian workers, the labor party could establish fraternal links with the New Democratic Party, which is the mass party of the workers in English Canada.

6. Conception and Dynamic of the Program

Most of the demands proposed above have already been advanced at one time or another in the course of the struggle of the Québécois people for their liberation. Some other

demands were borrowed from the experiences of the masses in other countries who have known a parallel struggle with the one we are waging in Quebec. To be sure, the list of demands is far from complete -- it is an unfinished program that we will be in a position to elaborate and deepen in the course of new battles and new experiences in the struggle for emancipation. The program we propose to the Quebec masses must be flexible so that it can be tested in life, a program open to improvements called for as new problems arise.

Basing itself above all on the objective needs of the Québécois nation, those which have already been formulated and those which have not, the two sections of the program form a guide for the organization and action of the Québécois masses, capable of showing the road forward for a real emancipation of the nation, a road which permits the Québécois to gain important victories in the short term in the course of the struggle for the implementation of the whole program by the workers and farmers government.

In this sense, the program is not a series of abstract ideas nor an artificial doctrine imposed upon the Québécois reality, but rather a product worked out here and today by participants in the struggle.

The program of all the bourgeois parties in Quebec expresses the interests of those who dominate Quebec, in the sense that they do not propose demands that seriously undermine the strength or privileges of our oppressors. Although the programs of some bourgeois parties back some reforms, these are proposed in the framework of patching up the present system and of making the status quo "more liveable". The reforms proposed do not have the aim of the national liberation of Quebec, but rather the illusory and short-term "satisfaction" of the mass movement which struggles for national liberation, by pretending to change things without really changing anything basic and without disturbing our exploiters.

Unlike bourgeois programs, the program which we propose expresses in a coherent and uncompromising way the immediate and long-term interests of the Québécois nation, the majority of which is composed of workers. The program does not propose a *modus vivendi* between the Québécois masses and those who oppress them, a program

which would be "acceptable to all". Our program places itself unequivocally on the battlefield for national emancipation, a struggle without compromise against all privilege and against all oppression of the Québécois nation. One of the foundations of this program is the principle that national rights are not "negotiable" between the oppressor and the oppressed but something inalienable and legitimate, owed to the oppressed Québécois. The program takes for granted that it is impossible to liberate the oppressed -- that is, the vast majority of the Québécois -- without eliminating the power and privileges of those who maintain the status quo, whether they are foreigners or Québécois.

Although the program has as its point of departure a solution to the national question it does not stop there. The national oppression of the Québécois is neither an accident nor something abstract having no connection with society in general. National oppression is a product of the social system, a conscious invention of those who exploit the Québécois economically and use the political, social and cultural institutions to reinforce and maintain this economic exploitation.

For this reason, no real, long-lasting solution is possible without radically transforming the underlying social system. Once in power, the Quebec workers and farmers will be obliged to resolve the national question and to defend the actions taken to solve this problem, to change fundamentally the economic and social bases of Quebec society.

This is why the program also includes demands of a social and economic nature and does not limit itself only to directly national democratic demands. The national question is central to the Quebec nation, but it can only be solved by a program that envisages the transformation of the very nature of society.

A program like that of the Parti Québécois, which limits itself to incomplete, moderate national demands without putting in question the social system and without envisaging the establishment of a new political power based on the working majority, cannot in any way serve as a guide to the Patriotes who are looking for the road to national emancipation. Such a program, which only takes up demands that are realizable within the present system, without making incursions against the power and privileges of the capitalists, can only end in very imperfect results.

In this sense, it is necessary to link programmatically the immediate national demands with the more global demands which are necessary to change Quebec society from top to bottom, thus assuring us of a complete and lasting national liberation. This is why the program that we propose includes democratic demands such as the right to speak our language at work, as well as economic and social demands, such as the sliding scale of wages.

7. Nationalism and Internationalism

As the program explains, Quebec nationalism is not in opposition to internationalism. Quite the contrary. The Quebec Patriotes have much to learn from the struggle of other colonized people in the world and they have much to teach them. The Québécois have potential allies among the common people in every country. As the spirit of the program shows, the most consistent and militant nationalists are also internationalists who are in solidarity with all the oppressed peoples of the world.

To say that Quebec is ripe for national emancipation and that the situation permits the coming to power of the workers and farmers does not mean that the Patriotes will be victorious on the first blow; several stages will be encountered along the way. But it can be said that the question will be definitively settled by the tempo of development of the struggles of oppressed people around the world. Each time that an oppressed people succeeds in liberating itself from the grip of imperialism, this constitutes an important victory for us, serving as an inspiration and example. On the other hand, each victory won by us in our struggle constitutes an enormous inspiration to all the other wretched of the earth.

8. The Kind of Society We Are Aiming For

The realization of independence will be the work of the Quebec masses themselves, conscious of the stakes of the struggle and of its goals. No one else will do it for them and no one else is capable. Only that force that is constituted by the masses in action can assure the establishment of a new, free, independent, and French homeland for the Québécois nation. The aim is not some improvement of the situation, a little more autonomy for Quebec, some symbolic rights for their language, or a little less exploitation. We are not seeking to patch up a corrupt and rotten social

system which can only continue to anglicize us, oppress us, pollute the air and our lakes and to treat us like slaves. We do not seek ententes with those who have always responded to our just demands with force, repression and military occupation.

We have been prisoners of this system and its national oppression for more than 200 years and we say -- enough. We want to put an end to this national oppression and to this system which has created and sustains it. We want to show to the whole world that we are capable of building a new society free of all exploitation, a society which can only be socialist and democratic, controlled by those who built the roads, the schools, the factories, the hospitals, the parks and the theatres. Only in this way will we be able to stand before the world as an equal, emancipated country, capable of bringing real support to the other people of the world who will want to follow us.

Such is the only road towards the establishment of a really independent and French Quebec.

W7-Québec

1972: Programme de combat pour un Québec indépendant et français

See also in W15a – A voir dans W15a:

1972-07July5Ba: **(LSA) Class outline: Quebec**

1972-07July5Bb: **Strategy for Quebec Liberation**

1972-07July5Bc: **“La politique de Lénine”**

1972-07July5Bd: **“Sur la langue et le nationalisme”**

1972-07July5Be: **La parole à Lénine**

